

Checking in on our future

WHERE DO WE GROW FROM HERE?

OCTOBER 2000

We asked you to talk with us. And you have.

The current review of Clark County's Comprehensive Growth Management Plan involves a number of key issues that will help shape our community's future. We urged county residents to find out more about the issues, to get involved, and to offer opinions. Many of you have done just that. We appreciate your interest and your input.

This is what you told us.

At CitizenSpeak I on September 16, participants toured displays at six topic stations, responded to a walk-through survey, and spent time in small group discussions on the following topics:

- General foundation of the plan
- How much growth?
- Where to grow?
- How to grow/housing?
- How to grow/jobs?
- How do we make Clark County a desirable place to live?

Six topic groups met during the first two weeks of October to further discuss the topics introduced at CitizenSpeak I. In addition, the county's Neighborhood Advisory Committee hosted three community meetings. We heard many things from the citizens who participated in these activities. Some of them were conflicting, but key messages were repeated throughout the process.

HOW MUCH GROWTH?

Participants were divided about what level of growth (high, medium, or low) to plan for. In the walk-through survey and the October topic groups, the vast majority of participants supported planning for high or medium growth. They think it is important to provide adequate infrastructure in advance of the growth rather than trying to catch up later.

When asked if we should continue to plan for 19 percent of the population to live in the rural area and 81 percent to live in the urban area, the majority of participants said that we should. However, many people don't want to see as much density for urban areas as is projected and think that some of the rural areas should be rezoned to accommodate planned growth.



HOW DO WE MAKE CLARK COUNTY A DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE?

Participants said that creating and supporting livable neighborhoods is key to making this a desirable place to live. Many see neighborhood parks, pedestrian and bicycle access to schools, services, and parks, and a range of transportation options as important to sustaining the livability of neighborhoods.



A number of groups suggested that design standards be used to ensure that new development and redevelopment support quality neighborhoods. Design standards address such things as the exterior appearance of structures, landscaping, and requirements for walkways.

Zoning was seen as crucial to making Clark County a desirable place to live, providing a variety of housing choices, meeting density goals, providing jobs, and managing growth. Citizens emphasized that exceptions to zoning should be kept to a minimum.

Many groups stated that getting community input and support should be required for zoning changes and as part of the land-use planning and development process. Specifically, people said that the county could help preserve the quality of neighborhoods by giving neighborhoods a greater voice in land-use issues for their particular areas, setting design standards, and providing design review opportunities and better notice of potential zoning changes.



GENERAL DISCUSSION

Natural resources and environmental issues related to the comprehensive plan were major discussion points. Participants said it was important to maintain flexibility to respond to the Endangered Species Act and other environmental considerations and constraints when identifying buildable land. People said that when identifying how much buildable land we have within an urban growth area, we must be sure that the land is truly buildable.

Another topic was how to define rural land. Many of the rural residents expressed frustration over the regulatory constraints placed on their land. Some emphasized that land has been designated as rural that they felt did not serve any rural purpose. Several groups suggested that the county better define the purpose of preserving the rural lands and provide more opportunities for rural property owners to participate in the decisions that affect them.

HOW TO GROW/HOUSING?

Opinions on how to address density and provide a variety of housing types varied greatly. Participants in the walk-through survey were almost evenly split on whether to keep the 60/40 housing type goal. This goal calls for new housing construction in each urban growth area (UGA) to be 60 percent single-family and 40 percent multi-family (apartments, condominiums, etc.).



Participants offered ideas to help smaller communities address this goal. Suggestions included providing communities with flexibility in determining how they will meet the current 60/40 goal and establishing lower multi-family goals for smaller communities based on the community's size.

Participants also voiced a wide range of opinions on whether the 6/16 density goal was appropriate throughout the county. This goal calls for new construction to average 6 housing units per acre for single-family development and 16 units per acre for multi-family development.

The walk-through survey was almost evenly split on whether to expand the urban growth boundary (UGB). Opinions ranged from not allowing UGB expansion for communities that are not trying to meet the 6/16 density goal; to not requiring communities that have met the goal to fill up all vacant land within their UGBs before expanding; to not allowing any expansion of the UGB.

Redevelopment of blighted areas was suggested at several meetings. At one meeting, participants said redeveloping such areas could help a UGA meet its density goals.

Some participants suggested offering developers incentives to provide a variety of housing types as a way to help meet the multi-family goal. Participants also supported diversity of affordable housing for all income levels and for people with disabilities and the elderly.



HOW TO GROW/JOB?

Participants noted that the stream of Clark County residents crossing the river to work in Portland is putting a strain on the road system. They were split over whether there should be incentives for development that provides jobs, but they clearly believed more jobs were needed. The jobs should be in a wide range of fields and at all wage levels. Locating jobs in areas that are good for the community and balancing development with conservation of open space is important. Providing needed infrastructure and a range of transportation options are crucial to drawing jobs to Clark County. They felt more public involvement was needed to ensure that commercial/industrial development is good for the community.



WHERE TO GROW?

Participants said that if no expansion of the urban growth boundary is going to take place, the county and cities need to insist on developments' meeting established densities within the urban growth areas. Suggestions about how to make denser urban development more acceptable include designing more accessible and walkable retail centers, creating zoning rules that encourage attractive high-density development, encouraging growth in places where infrastructure and service capacity already exist, and promoting development that accommodates an aging population.

People stated that it is important to protect the quality of rural life. They said that the county should use conservation easements and other methods to reimburse property owners for lost development rights. Family compounds should be allowed in rural areas. Regulations should allow rural residents to subdivide their property, build permanent residences in hardship circumstances, and construct granny flats to keep their families together. Participants also emphasized the need to protect open spaces, forested lands, and natural wetlands.



We're hearing from citizens in other ways, too.

CLARK COUNTY YOUTH COMMISSION LEADS OUTREACH EFFORT TO YOUTH

With its focus on Clark County's future, the comprehensive plan is of special importance to our youth. The county's Youth Commission, which is a formal advisory board to the county commissioners, is carrying out activities to help determine youth perspectives on various comprehensive plan issues.

- Youth Commission members have selected density as an issue for their own study. As part of their study, they are identifying sites throughout the county that they consider good examples of what they do and don't like as the sites relate to density issues. These examples will be used to help frame their discussion and illustrate their recommendations.
- Discussion groups facilitated by Youth Commission members are taking place at Hudson's Bay, Prairie, and Mountain View high schools. Participants include youth from the surrounding

- schools as well as the site itself.
- A survey on comprehensive plan issues is featured on the Youth Commission's web site at www.youthcommission.org. Local schools have been notified about the survey and have been asked to encourage their students' participation.

Results from Youth Commission activities will be included with other input from county residents.

WE'VE GOT MAIL

Additional input to county staff and decision-makers is coming via e-mail and regular mail. Since August, the county has received approximately 50 pieces of correspondence related to the comprehensive plan review. The topics are wide ranging, everything from transportation to the industrial land supply to rural zoning. All written comments that include the sender's name and address will become part of the official public record.



Express your views. Stay informed.

You can reach us in the following ways:



- **Web site:** Through Clark County's home page at www.co.clark.wa.us. Click on "Comprehensive Growth Management Plan Review" under "What's New."
- **Information line:** (360)397-2375 ext. 4993; TDD (360)397-6057.
- **E-mail:** compplan@co.clark.wa.us. Please send us your name and e-mail address if you would like to be added to our e-mail list.
- **Mailing address:** Comprehensive Plan, P.O. Box 9810, Vancouver, WA 98666.
- **Columbian Info-line** (for recorded information about upcoming activities): (360)699-6000, mailbox 3632.
- **Speakers:** Call or e-mail us if you would like a speaker to talk to your group about comprehensive plan issues. All you need to do is supply the place and time.

We're about halfway toward the finish line.

The review of Clark County's comprehensive plan began in August 1999 and continues through December 2001. The process has been divided into three basic parts.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Phase I: Organization and scoping (August 1999 to June 2000)

The Board of Clark County Commissioners and a steering committee of elected officials from the county's cities examined major policy options in the review. Some issues were included because of legal decisions, state Growth Management Act requirements, or information newly available since the plan was adopted in 1994.

WHERE WE ARE

Phase II: Policy options and directions (July 2000 to January 2001)

We are about halfway through this phase right now. The major emphasis has been on gathering input from residents.

- CitizenSpeak assemblies and a variety of other meetings will give the Board of Clark County Commissioners focused public input on the pros and cons of policy options.
- The steering committee continues to meet monthly to discuss comprehensive plan issues involving multiple jurisdictions. Each city within Clark County is also revisiting its own land-use plan, which must be consistent with countywide planning policies.
- The Clark County Planning Commission will hold public hearings on the major issues through December of this year. In late December, the planning commission will make a formal recommendation to the Board of Clark County Commissioners
- After considering all the input, the county commissioners will make decisions on major policy issues beginning in January 2001.

WHERE WE'RE GOING

Phase III: Amendments to the plan that implement major policy decisions (February 2001 through December 2001)

During this period the county will decide how to implement major policy decisions made in the first two phases. Important tasks include:

- Checking the comprehensive plan against the U. S. Census 2000 update. Population projections may need to be adjusted based on the newest available census data.
- Allocating population and employment forecasts. They need to be consistent with where we want to encourage people to live and work.
- Updating capital facilities plans and related cost estimates. We need realistic estimates of the public funds required for infrastructure to support the county's 20-year growth.
- Developing urban growth area options and land-use mapping alternatives. Zoning needs to be consistent with comprehensive plan policies and land-use designations.
- Determining appropriate environmental documentation. If we change urban growth boundaries or zoning, we may need to prepare environmental impact statements to meet state environmental standards.

The Clark County Planning Commission will hold additional hearings on specific changes to individual sections of the comprehensive plan and make further recommendations to the Board of Clark County Commissioners. The final decision-making authority rests with the three county commissioners, who expect to complete their review by December 31, 2001.

Note: There will be a variety of opportunities for public input during Phase III. This will include opportunities for citizens to provide their comments at all public hearings held by the planning commission and the county commissioners.

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CitizenSpeak II

A COUNTYWIDE ASSEMBLY ON THE COMPREHENSIVE GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

It's your turn. Work with your elected officials to help refine options on key issues and provide your thoughts on tradeoffs. The conversation and input will be very focused.

Thursday, November 9, 2000

5:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Clark County Fairgrounds
Community Meeting Building
17420 NE Delfel Road, Ridgefield

This is the culmination of all the public input provided over the last three months. It's a chance to hear what you and your neighbors have been telling the county. And it's your opportunity to have another say-so prior to the public hearings conducted by the planning commission and the county commissioners in December and January.

Need other incentives? How about these?

- **Highly interactive.** We promise you won't be bored!
- **Children welcome.** There will be a Kids' Corner.
- **Snacks provided.** You can nibble your way through the evening.

Most important of all: We want, and need, to hear from you.

Why? Because we all have a stake in Clark County's future. Please join us.



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